



winter 2005 ponderings

Newsletter of the Moonee Ponds Creek
Co-ordination Committee



Pieces of community artwork, like the gorgeous new CityLink mural, enhance the natural beauty of our Moonee Ponds Creek. Turn to page 8 to read more about this great initiative.

co-ordinator's ramblings...

Dear Creek Dwellers,

It seems that no sooner you catch your breath after the Autumn planting season, then the Spring planting season is upon us again. Still, it's a lovely time of year, and Spring is definitely in the air. The buds of the beautiful Gold Dust Wattle (*Acacia acinacea*) are swelling, the Pallid Cuckoo has commenced his mournful mating trill and the sweet scent of early spring blooms are in the air.

Have you noticed any spring mating activities around your part of the creek lately? Here at the depot, we've observed Magpies busily building their nests, and a general flurry of activity in the air. This is the time of year for putting pen to paper, or logging on to your computer, to send us your latest sightings. It's always great to get creek notes in the mail, and it certainly gives us a greater picture of our creek environment. So please don't hesitate to let us know what's going on in your backyard.

Special thanks go to Phyllis Angel, for sending us some wonderful photos of the creek in flood around the Pascoe Vale area. Thanks Phyllis!

We're looking forward to a packed Spring planting season this year, and especially to our most recent new friends group activities along the Westbreen Creek in Pascoe Vale.

Thanks again to all of the wonderful contributors who make Ponderings the great read that it is.

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thoughts from a bushland regenerator....



Sandy Simpson, a bushland regenerator at Royal Park, shares her thoughts with us on the rare White's Skink, the sweet little Spotted Pardalote and the odd discoveries made when hand-weeding.....

I am a bush regeneration volunteer in Royal Park, Parkville.

The weeding has petered out in the Royal Park west remnant and I am moving to the Brens Drive remnant to weed out more *Galenia pubescens* amongst the rare native grasses and lilies.

It was in Brens Drive recently that I found a lost yellow-green budgie. She had been missing for four weeks. Her name turned out to be 'Little Girl'. I carried her in my hand to the animal hospital. Her owner was teaching skiing in Alaska.

The Royal Park remnants are host to a

variety of bird life. Only a few weeks ago I saw a Spotted Pardalote on a *Myoporum sp.* just outside the Royal Park west remnant. It has not been officially sighted in Royal Park, however it is on the Royal Park bird list. It has a black short bill, crown and wings, and its tail is black with rows of white spots. Its throat and undertail coverts are bright yellow and its upper tail is mainly red. It is quite a small bird and very beautiful.

A White's Skink habitat exists on the other side of the Royal Park west remnant. White's Skinks are a terrestrial, communally-living species, with small family groups sharing burrows, rocks, logs

and other ground litter debris.

The White's Skink was once widespread within the Greater Metropolitan area, but has now mostly disappeared. The White's Skink habitat in Royal Park is considered highly regionally significant.



Some of the indigenous mammalian fauna likely to have occurred in Royal Park at the time of European settlement (modified from WALLIS et. al., 1993) are Platypus, Sugar Glider, Eastern Grey Kangaroo, Koala and Dingo.

fishy finds are afoot.....

Waterwatch Update
By Helen Suter

Over the last two months, we have come across a number of small fish in the creek at our three upper sites: Jacana Sites 1 and 2 and Mitchell Parade Weir. And you may remember, in the last edition of Ponderings, the reported sightings of Common Galaxias. Our team of volunteers does not include a fish expert, so we have been unable to identify the fish. Instead we propose to collect a sample and take it to an expert for identification. We are hoping that it is a native Galaxia, rather than an introduced mosquito fish. I will keep you updated via this column.

Our bug voucher collection is coming along quite nicely, with assistance from Kate Rhook. Kate is now the Waterwatch Co-ordinator for the Yarra region, as Jessica has temporarily departed due to another addition to her family. Kate is very excited about our collection and has

been helping with the identification. According to Kate, we have successfully managed to correctly identify the majority of the bugs, and she identified some of the more difficult ones for us. This will help us with correct identification in the future. And steady progress is being made on the purchase of a Waterwatch kit and associated equipment. The Moonee Ponds Creek will then have an equipment set dedicated to our region, making it much easier for other water monitoring groups to get involved.

Thanks to the dedicated Waterwatch participants: Gabrielle, Zak, Carolyn, Nonie, Patricia and Jenny. Report any fish sightings (what, where and when) to me, Helen Suter, at helen-suter@pacific.net.au or MPCCC on 9333 2406. If you would like to attend a Waterwatch activity contact the details above.



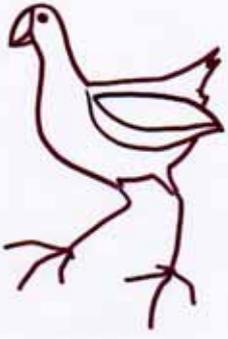
Common Galaxias



Mosquito Fish



what do you think about us?



We invite you to take a break, sit down, have a cuppa or a glass of something nice, (depending on the time of day, of course!) and complete the MPCCC Feedback Survey.

The Feedback Survey will assist us in gauging the communities perceptions of the role of the MPCCC. We hope to present the results of this survey to councils and other potential funding bodies to help recognise our value and commitment to community and the environment, and to secure an ongoing funding commitment to what we do.



happy 20th birthday moonee ponds creek bike path!

On Thursday 21st July our Moonee Ponds Creek Trail (bike path) turned 20 years old! To celebrate this auspicious birthday, year 9 and 10 students from Penola Catholic College and Strathmore Secondary came festooned in balloons, bearing a special bike-shaped birthday cake created from 120 cupcakes (thanks to Ray from Penola). At Boeing Reserve in Strathmore Heights, Moonee Valley City Council Mayor Cr. Lydia Kauzlaric gave the official welcome and speech. An advanced River Red Gum, kindly donated by Melbourne Water, was planted by Cr. Kauzlaric and Cr. Mark Higginbotham, Mayor of Moreland, to commemorate the event. The Penola students (still balloon festooned) then continued on their ride down the creek as part of their Source to Sea program. I'm sure they made many onlookers wonder what was going on.

Further down the creek, prep to grade 4 students from Moonee Ponds Central Primary walked from Fanny St Reserve part way along the bike path. The Chinese Elderly Exercise Group took a 40 minute power stroll from Flemington Bridge, and the Grade 6 students from Flemington Primary had a bike ride from Travancore Park, via the Zoo to Princes Park and back.

Thanks to Carolyn Layton from Penola Catholic College for discovering the plaque at Boeing Reserve which marked the opening ceremony of the bike path, and for inspiring this birthday party. And to Simon Bennett of Moonee Valley City Council for co-ordinating the day's celebrations. And of course thank you to the teachers, students and members of the community for providing the festive spirit. Thanks to Strathmore students Tom, James, Josie and Brett for

digging the tree hole and decorating the path. And finally... Bicycle Victoria intend to seek assistance from relevant councils and land authorities to contribute towards a trail map to commemorate the trail's 20th year! The bike path now feels well and truly appreciated!



Did You Know?

A natural spring occurs at the base of the trestle bridge in Boeing Reserve, Strathmore Heights. The little spot is always a bit boggy and oozes freshwater into the creek. Can you find it?



friends of sacred kingfisher

10 april

The frogs were singing and the sun was beaming for the kick off of the Autumn Planting Season along the creek in Westmeadows. All were excited to be back along the creek marveling at the growth of plants and replacing those who didn't quite make it through the Summer. 8 volunteers took part in the event including 6 members of the extended Di Natale family. Their extended Moonee Ponds Creek backyard is certainly benefiting from all their hard work over the years. We planted 164 trees, shrubs and grasses into mulch beds under the watchful eye of the resident Pied Cormorant.



2 happy planters, 2 fulfilled buckets!

travancore residents

16th april



Much can be achieved when folk work together!

12 local residents met under the community arts mural at Delhi Reserve and took to the task of planting 214 grasses, groundcovers and wildflowers with gusto! The day was successful and very friendly. Most who attended knew each other (and each others dogs!) from the neighborhood.



friends of lower moonee ponds creek

17th april

When visiting this site in North Melbourne it feels a bit like the bush meets the city! The 16 volunteers who attended the planting day worked splendidly, using grasses and groundcovers to "create a beautiful garden" amongst the established trees and shrubs that grow on the creek slope. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, chatting away in the sunshine.

strath-oak planters

14th april

The friends have continued their work this season on the Oak Park side of their 'patch of the creek'. Infill planting and hand weeding kept the group of 13 occupied, and for once this planting didn't get rained out at lunch time!! This Spring the friends will be spot planting along the footy field fence creating a forest of green for all to enjoy.



Doug works away in his extended backyard with it's expressive backdrop of the trestle bridge.

autumn planting season

As always I am heartened to share my passion of the creek with so many inspiring and generous people. People who acknowledge the seasonal changes, admire the new growth of plants, are thrilled by the sound of a new bird call and just enjoy the space that Moonee Ponds Creek provides.

This season I have noticed friendships developing along the creek, people recognising each other from their neighborhood, and sharing and discussing their experiences of contributing to their local community together (nothing like a satisfying meal, a warm cuppa and a doughnut to get you chatting!!)

Thank you to all who have participated along the creek this season. Not only do your efforts benefit our local environment, but they contribute to the bigger global picture, our health and our well being.

Special thank you's go out to our wonderful planting staff: Mel, Maddie, Elissa, Trevor, Natasha + Penny. Hooray!!!!

See you all this Springtime!!
Stephanie

boeing reserve troopers 7th May

9 volunteers ascended the slopes of the Boeing Reserve Troopers bed and continued on with the spectacular revegetation efforts that have taken place over the past 3 years. 160 plants were tucked lovingly into the soil! Next time you're along the Moonee Ponds Creek bike path, look out for this ever-growing bed just down stream of the trestle bridge in Strathmore Heights.



30th april

This site had the hardest, most gravelly and stone filled ground of all sites this season! Volunteers were very hard working and did an incredible job getting the jute mat area looking green with 230 grasses and shrubs. The kids who attended this planting were very excited to discover a wheel protruding from the soil and started excavating the area, to reveal, not a car, but a pram!!! The Greencorps team that spent time working along the Moonee Ponds Creek also contributed to the area, planting a band of semi-aquatic species along the waters edge into jute mat. A soon-to-be haven for foraging birds and singing frogs!

Above: The great team work of the Thorpe family greening their local creek bank in Essendon.

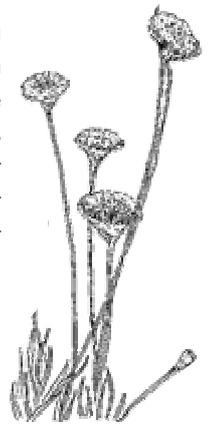
Below : Helen + Elijah descend the slope with their planting package.

essendon residents



5th june

Local resident Andrea contacted MPCCC with a wild wind tunnel and an empty view from her home along the creek. She was keen to plant a band of trees and shrubs on the creek escarpments in Essendon. And this is exactly what we did! 20 volunteers, mostly new comers to the MPCCC community plantings gathered on the creek slopes and planted, staked and guarded 80 escarpment species. Local residents made sure we left a space along the slope for the local children to climb aboard their cardboard sleds and have fun sliding down the grassy slopes! A special thank you to Andrea for taking such beautiful photos of the volunteers and the days events and also to Helen for bringing along some of her homemade tasty sweets for all to share!



friends of strathnaver grassland 15th may

The First Strathmore Scouts were out and about with the Friends of Strathnaver Grasslands for their Autumn planting this season, and it was very apparent to all who attended the hugely successful Spring planting last year that the site was much drier this time. We have found plants grown in tubes are too large for planting on the shallow soils of the Strathnaver Grasslands; cells (about the size of film canisters) and hikos (about the size of a cardboard toilet roll) are much easier to dig holes for and plant. All up we planted about 600 grasses and wildflowers. Remnant plants grow at the Strathnaver Grasslands, from which seed is collected and plants then grown. We then re-plant these species back in the Reserve. Its like returning them home! A big thank you goes out to the nearby residents who have kept an eye on the plants, topping up their water supply when they looked thirsty.



Alan (bird watcher extraordinaire) had a list of bird sightings for us from all along the creek. And after the planting and a bite to eat, he was off to spot some more.

In a mammoth effort the Friends planted, staked and guarded 108 scattered trees and shrubs all the way up the escarpment of the Wallaby Site (as the west creek bank has come to be known). Elissa speedily distributed the mats, stakes, guards, pins and tubestock just ahead of the avid bunch of 12 planters proceeding steadily up the hill behind her. People were having a good chat over the constant banging of the mallets and hammers which echoed out across the valley. Our ever-faithful Julie was there stoically planting away and praising the good work of the dedicated community at this site.

Those who joined us from the 1st planting of the season were pleased to comment on the marked difference in the soil moisture content and ease of planting, after some much needed recent rains. At this first planting 9 volunteers joined forces in planting 46 scattered trees and shrubs, staking and guarding them. All were relieved at the second planting to see that despite the dry conditions previous plants that went in were doing well.

friends of jacana wetlands

22nd May + 19th June



Together we're creating a forest. Just imagine this valley in 100 years!!



gowanbrae residents 1st may

Eight people turned up to help plant up the western side of the southern footbridge at Gowanbrae. It was a wonderful sunny morning, with many walkers out and about enjoying the creek's sparkling glory. One group of ladies were sightseers from Torquay. They were very impressed by how pleasant the creek was, and thought the plants were flourishing. We still can't believe how the plants have grown at the northern footbridge - it's like a jungle! Keep an eye out for a family of Black-shouldered Kites who are very active at the moment.



Blue skies and happy faces, a perfect recipe for a community planting.



Ivan and his soon to be planted tubestock.

brunswick south-west planters

28th may



8 volunteers joined together and planted 50 tubes, protecting them with stakes, guards and mats. The trees, mostly River Red Gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) with a few Lightwoods (*Acacia implexa*), continued an avenue of trees along the creek that began 7 years ago. Many comments were made about how the extra trees would make such a difference, creating shade on those hot summer bike rides, enticing birds to nest and feed and maybe, if we cast our minds into the future just a little way....their roots may even start breaking up the concrete!). This is a well loved part of our creek and the continued efforts of the local residents really show.

friends of upper moonee ponds creek

26th june

The planting day at Wright Street with F.O Upper M.P Creek was a sunny Sunday. 11 volunteers were involved in staking and guarding 130 tubestock of riparian shrub and tree species. It was a true team event, some digging holes, others following along planting the plants. The team also took the time to rescue about 30 previously planted shrubs that had been covered in debris by the roaring February floods. Most of these species were staked and guarded again to prevent grazing by the hungry mouths around the Reserve! Many thanks to Kim Westcombe and Julie Law with their words of encouragement and delectable scones. Thank you also to Anna Zsoldos from Hume City Council who organised the planting event.



Brendan re-guards one of the plants bowled over by the February floods.



We were fortunate enough to see two of the resident Black Wallabies bouncing through the *Phragmites* by the creek. At first we couldn't figure out what was making the patterned movement through the vegetation until the two dark bodies emerged on the other side of the creek.

attwood creek residents 29th may

Five people came to help plant along Attwood Creek behind Dundee Court, Greenvale. Julie Law wanted to join us but found herself a bit too far south....don't worry Julie, we know you were with us in spirit. Thanks to John, Yvonne (congratulations on their beautiful new granddaughter), Josh, Alex and Kerri. We successfully planted 30 trees and shrubs. To quote young Josh, "We're builders. We're building homes for birds!" If you ever visit this lovely part of Attwood Creek, look out for "Missy" the Rottweiler. She loves to scare the daylight out of you, but don't worry, she is secured by a chain.



"We're builders. We're building homes for birds!"



lowther hall anglican grammar school



On the 18th of March, fifty grade 3 students from Lowther Hall Anglican

Grammar School planted 450 tubestock into their school yard, with the help of Stephanie and Debbie, to create their own native garden to entice birds and insects. The kids have really become guardians of their patch, making sure it's watered and not stood on by passer-by's.

strathmore north primary school

On the 26th of April, sixty grade 3/4 students from Strathmore North Primary School planted 150 tubestock into the existing mulch beds along Brosnan Cres in Strathmore. The digging was tough, so thanks to Nina, Sarah and the lovely parents who came along to help. Thanks also to Bob for watering everything in.



meadowbank primary school

On the 18th May, fifty grade 5/6 students planted 245 tubestock at Jacana Wetlands. They were split up into three groups - the Cormorants, Growling Grass Frogs and Black Ducks – before they were rotated through the three activities, which were planting with Steph and Deb, Waterwatch activities with Kate Rhook (Waterwatch co-ordinator for the Yarra region) and eco-story time with Elissa.

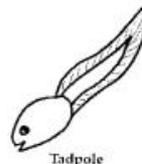


penola catholic college

On the 20th May, sixty year 9 students from Penola Catholic College planted 140 tubestock onto Victrack land in West Melbourne. For some reason they certainly enjoyed our opening talk about healthy roots, bushes for habitat and digging great holes. They did a fantastic job considering the soil was like concrete.



westbreen primary school



On the 8th June, World Oceans Day, sixty six grade 3/4 students from Westbreen Primary School enjoyed a "Creeks Alive!" session along Westbreen Creek in the K.W. Joyce Reserve. As part of their term 2 theme "Water", the students were keen to get to know their local creeky creatures, otherwise known as water bugs. We found a whole lot of little critters, namely Dragonfly larva (mudeyes), Mayfly larva, Tadpoles, Water Fleas, Water Boatman and much more. The kids also learnt about how our evergreen native trees are much better for creek health than the introduced deciduous trees. And they were very excited to learn that they would be returning to the creek in September to help put some plants in with students from Pascoe Vale Secondary College.

school planting dates for your diary

- 1 Sep: Glenroy West Primary School (in school)
- 7 Sep: Strathmore North Primary School @ Brosnan Ave
- 14 Sep: Westbreen Primary School and Pascoe Vale Girls Secondary College @ Westbreen Creek
- 26 Oct: Penola Catholic College @ Oaklands Junction

all are welcome to school planting days!

If you would like to join us and help during any of these week day plantings, please contact me. It's great for the students to meet community volunteers who plant up the creek because they love it!

Contact Elissa Simmons, MPCCC Schools Liason on 9333 2406 or elissa@mpcc.org



colour comes to the creek

By Jane Calvert

CityLink has recently undertaken a massive community art project in the Moonee Ponds Creek vicinity, the results of which have exceeded the expectations of even those who came up with the idea!



A beautiful mural, almost 50m long and 8m high, now adorns what was once a plain concrete wall under CityLink's Bell St off-ramp. Funded by CityLink and supported by the City of Moonee Valley, the project was completed by public artist Amanda King and students from Strathmore Secondary College. The MPCCC approved the design, which had to be consistent with the Moonee Ponds Creek Public Art Strategy. The MPCCC also provided sketches of indigenous flora and fauna, which the artists turned into stencils before applying the images to the wall.

The idea first arose in response to frustration at constantly having to clean graffiti 'tags' from the wall. CityLink did some research with local councils and found many were using public art as a diversionary tactic, finding the incidence of graffiti and tagging was significantly reduced on areas that featured artistic designs. Let's hope it works! But more importantly, the mural enhances the creek environs and helps to celebrate its value as a true community asset.



"Public Art is art that has social significance and social function."

Lucy Lippard



mini moonee moonee's



Hello Mini Moonee Moonee's!

A big hello to all our young tree planters and creek carers out there, or, as we like to call you, our Mini Moonee Moonee's!

Kids, this section of Ponderings is just for you. There will be lots of puzzles, competitions, colouring-in and loads of other fun stuff. Lets get stuck in!!

Drawing competition



The Mini Moonee Moonee's drawing competition is on! So, find those crayons, sharpen your pencils and ask your Mum "Where is my painting set?".

We would like you to draw or paint us a picture of something you love about the Moonee Ponds Creek. It could be a duck, a gum tree, the creek, some fish or a bug. Let your imagination run wild!

There will be a winner chosen from two age groups: 5 years and under, and 6 years and over. Each winner will receive a prize, and their works of art will be published in the next edition of Ponderings.

Send your entry to "Mini Moonee Moonee's", MPCCC, PO Box 2170, Greenvale 3059 by Friday 16 September. Don't forget to tell us your age and address, so we can send your entry back.



Plant Star of the Season

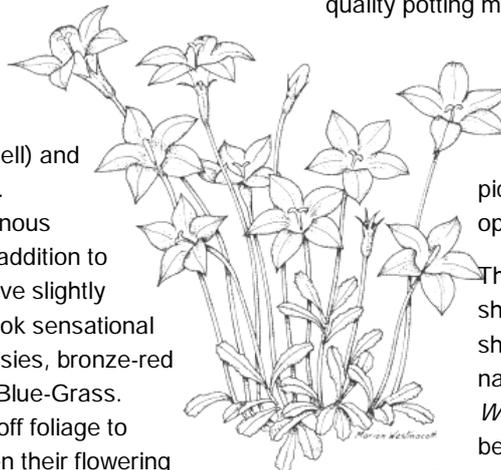
Beautiful bluebells.....

Surely, the delicate flowers of our native Bluebells make gorgeous garden additions.

Lets investigate them further shall we.....

Wahlenbergia sp. or Bluebells are bright-green tufty herbs with fleshy roots and almost woody, rhizomatous rootstocks. They all have beautiful, bright blue, sometimes white, very open flowers that are in the shape of a bell. The flowers are perched on the ends of long, slender, erect, green stalks. In most species, the flowers nod in bud, becoming erect as they mature and open (no, they are not wilting!).

Three commonly found *Wahlenbergia* species in the Melbourne area are *Wahlenbergia stricta* (Tall Bluebell), *Wahlenbergia communis* (Tufted Bluebell) and *Wahlenbergia luteola* (Yellow Bluebell). They can all be sourced through indigenous nurseries, and would make a beautiful addition to your 'grassland garden'. They each have slightly different growth requirements, but all look sensational when paired with yellow everlasting daisies, bronze-red Kangaroo Grass and bluish-grey Silky Blue-Grass. Simply cut back the finished, browned-off foliage to ground-level at the end of summer when their flowering



period is over. When the cooler weather and rains arrive you will see new bright green foliage poking its nose through the soil. Planting these delightful, dainty flowers en masse or in groups along pathways or between rocks and low ground covers gives a delicate long-flowering show from early spring to late summer. They also make ideal container plants, requiring a well-drained quality potting mix and a sprinkle of native Osmocote.

The petals are edible, and look very sweet when added to a salad. (I think that I would like a large quantity of flowers in my garden, before I did this though!). The Kooris certainly picked and ate the flowers. They taste, well, in my opinion, quite bland really!

Their family name, Campanulaceae, refers to the shape of the flowers, they are campanulate, i.e. bell-shaped. This bell shape allows easy access to pollinating insects of many sizes. The genus name, *Wahlenbergia*, is derived from Georg Goran Wahlenberg (1780–1851). The genus *Wahlenbergia* occurs in Australia, South Africa, South America and New Zealand.





people like us

weed alert rapid response program

The Department of Primary Industries has developed a program to prevent the establishment of new weeds in Victoria. And, the best bit is, that they need our help to ensure success.

By Natasha Baldyga

Just imagine.....

When Australia was first settled in the early 1830's by Europeans, if there had been the foresight to prevent the introduction of noxious environmental and agricultural weeds, such as the prolific and widely spread Paterson's Curse. The cost to Australia's agricultural production alone is an estimated average of \$3.9 billion per year. Weeds are recognised as the second most important threat to biological diversity, after habitat destruction.

Now imagine.....

What if we could shape Victoria's environmental and agricultural future by preventing new weeds from becoming established? This is exactly what the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is aiming to achieve, under their recently launched Weed Alert Rapid Response (WARR) program. The Weed Alert team focuses on weeds which are classified as either "New and Emerging to Victoria" and/or listed as "State Prohibited". These weeds have been assessed and determined that they would pose an unacceptable risk to both the environment and agricultural industry if they were allowed to become established.

To assist with the detection of these weeds, DPI is recruiting the general public to help with the "war on weeds" by becoming fully trained "Weed Spotters". The structure of the training program enables volunteers to raise their awareness of environmental issues, whilst learning identification skills in how to identify weed species such as Horsetail and Water Hyacinth, and how to report their findings. Many new and emerging weed species are sometimes unknowingly grown by gardeners or even sold in nurseries.

The DPI are also employing fully-trained "Weed Alert Contact Officers". They will provide training for community members who are interested in becoming Weed Spotters and joining the established Weed Spotter Network, which comprises over 600 community members.

If you would like to learn more about the Weed Spotters Program or State Prohibited Weeds, please contact Michael Hansford, Department of Primary Industries Weed Alert Rapid Response Implementation Officer, on 9296 4647 or the DPI Customer Service Centre hotline on 136 186.

State Prohibited Weeds

These weeds may not occur in Victoria, but still pose a significant threat if they invade and become established in Victoria. Or, if they are already established here, they pose a serious threat to our ecosystems, and can reasonably be expected to be eradicated. If present, infestations of a State Prohibited weed are relatively small. State Prohibited weeds are to be eradicated if possible from within Victoria or excluded from the State.

There are fourteen State Prohibited weeds. Some examples are: Nodding Thistle, Perennial Ragweed and Water Hyacinth.



Weed Spotter

The field collector, who watches for, reports, collects, identifies and delivers specimens of potential, new and emerging weeds to their Weed Alert Contact Officer. These people can be landholders, gardeners, members of naturalist groups or anyone interested in plants, gardening and conservation.

Weed Alert Contact Officer

This person will assist with the I.D. and filtering of a Weed Spotter's specimens. They will provide feedback about new and emerging weeds found and liaise with State and local Government officers.





spring nature notes

The seasonal change came one morning in early August when a waft of warm wind filled with a magical fragrance enveloped the day with the promise and energy of Spring.....

AUGUST

Follow The Aboriginal Seasonal Cycle....

As early as mid-July, the **Silver Wattles** or **Muyan** start to flower. They are the first wattles to do so, and will still be flowering into August. Silver Wattle has earned the name of "Barak's Wattle" because when he died at Coranderrk in Healsville on 15th August 1903, the Silver Wattle was in full golden bloom.

The beautiful little orchid, **Early Nancy**, is the first of the small food plants to flower. The honey-scented flowers re-shoot from its bulbous rootstock as soon as Autumn rains fall. The aborigines ate the small, white, densely starchy corms that are enveloped in black scale-leaves.

By late August the brightly yellow-flowered **Yam Daisy** or **Murnong** is budding. The radish-like tuber is dormant during the summer, and sprouts a rosette of leaves with the autumn rains. A new tuber forms during the winter, while the old tuber withers and becomes bitter. Although sometimes eaten raw, the non-starchy tubers were usually cooked in baskets in earth ovens, when they produced a dark sweet juice.

The aboriginal people of the greater Melbourne area moved slowly towards the lower lands as the spring temperatures rose. There they were able to snare ducks and other water-fowl, to catch all kinds of wildlife, and, as the season advanced, to get eggs from the nests of all kinds of birds.



SEPTEMBER

Bitter But Beautiful

Victoria has many species of the affectionately termed "egg and bacon" pea flowers. During September, many species of the **Bitter-peas**, **Bush-peas**, **Flat Peas** and **Parrot Peas** will come into full gorgeous flower. Why not plant one now?



Emeralds On The Window Pane

This month you will find on your window pane, small triangular green moths with red-edged wings. They are adults of a **Geometer Moth** whose caterpillars are often called inch- or looper-worms, because they move along regularly in a series of looping movements.

Our Ever Amazing Pondlife

Whirligig Beetles are laying eggs on the underside of submerged leaves.

The beautiful **Dragonflies** are beginning to emerge.



Bountiful Bird Action

The brightly-coloured **Eastern Rosellas** are undertaking courtship feeding. There are many different birds actively building their nests, like **Black-faced Cuckoo-shrikes**.

Magpie-larks are constructing a bowl-shaped nest from mud and grass, which is lined with hair and feathers, and frequently found near Willie Wagtail nests. **Grey Fantails** are building beautiful small, grey, cups, tailed like a wineglass without a base, of fine grass, bark-strips, plant fibres and spiders web.

Beautiful Butterflies

Meadow Argus Butterflies abound in grasses in our paddocks. **Wood White Butterflies** can be found around clumps of mistletoe found hanging on branches of eucalypt and wattle trees.

OCTOBER

The Green Cicada Cycle

The nymphs of these cicadas live in the soil for up to 7 years and suck sap from plant roots. When they mature, they climb up the nearest tree where the skin splits down the back and the familiar green adult emerges to sing its shrill bubbling song. After mating, the female cuts slits in the branches to lay hundreds of long cylindrical eggs. Soon the strange flea-like larvae hatch, drop onto the ground and quickly dig down to tree roots, where they form protective clay coverings around themselves.



Damsels and Dragons

Damselflies and Dragonflies

both belong to the ancient order of insects called Odonata. In Carboniferous times, over 300 million years ago, some dragonflies attained a wingspan of 27 inches. Dragonflies have their wings extended flatly at rest, whilst the more slender-bodied damselflies bring their wings loosely together over their back. Small insects are taken on the wing by the dragonfly forming a basket shape with its legs before transferring its prey into its mouth.



Pondlife Intricacies

Young **Backswimmers** and bright red **Bloodworm** Midges are emerging. **Hoary-headed Grebes** are building their nests of damp, floating, anchored mounds of green waterplants at Jacana Wetlands.

Native Blooms

We are in the midst of a flurry of flowering and seed setting by so many species of our beautiful indigenous plants. Keep your eye out for their gorgeous blooms. Why not visit a native grassland remnant?



winter sightings

We welcome all of your interesting wildlife observations, be they big or small! Don't forget to check out www.mpccc.org/fauna.htm where all the Moonee Ponds Creek wildlife sightings are now listed.

Clive Judd from the Strath-Oak Planters saw a **Wedge-tailed Eagle** on 27 May in Boeing Reserve, Strathmore. The Wedgie was slowly going south over the park/creek, at about 100 metres altitude. It looked as if it was hunting prey on the ground. A raven began harassing it over Mascoma St, and then it went south over Essendon Airport at 1.30 pm. Clive hasn't seen a Wedgie flying so low before! Thanks Clive.

The splendid Yellow-billed Spoonbill was seen again by Debbie in the morning of 31 May. He was feeding in a dam on Somerton Road, Bulla.

Allan Flack from the Brunswick South-West Planters has reported in two bird sightings. **Crested Terns** and an introduced Mallard



where seen in the brackish creek waters near Maculey Rd, Kensington.

Gabi Stannus has had some great bird sightings in June. Around 50 Straw-necked Ibis where feeding on the oval in Ormond Park, Moonee Ponds. 16 **Crested Pigeons** where sitting on the oval in Boeing Reserve. And she watched a Cormorant swallow a whole eel near the Macaulay Rd bridge in Kensington. It tipped its head up vertically to elongate its neck and gullet, and gulp, down it went, no chewing!



Andrew Cremona of Friends of Jacana Wetlands had an interesting discovery in his bathroom. There was, what we believe to be, a Southern Marbled Gecko. They aren't really found around here, so maybe



he is an import. Apparently, Green Tree Frogs regularly travel from Queensland to Victoria via banana boxes. Perhaps our Gecko has travelled the same way?

It seems to be the season for raptors. Whistling Kites and a Nankeen Kestrel at Woodlands Historic Park. Mary Cox has a family of Black-shouldered Kites in Gowanbrae. And a Brown Falcon was spotted by Judy Allen at Strathnaver Reserve and Westbreen Creek in Pascoe Vale.

Two Black Wallabies were seen at Wright St, Westmeadows by the Friends of Upper Moonee Ponds Creek, on their planting day in June.

Early one morning, whilst lighting the fire at our office at the Woodlands Historic Park depot, I heard the sad, leisurely, downward trill of the **Fan-tailed Cuckoo**, 'pee-eeer, pee-eeer, pee-eeer'. Their breeding season begins in July, so perhaps my lone cuckoo was mournfully calling for a mate. All cuckoo species are brood parasites: they lay their eggs in the nests of other birds. The Fan-tailed prefers the nest of the Brown Thornbill above all others, but will also settle for nests of flycatchers, fairy wrens, scrubwrens and other thornbills.



...upcoming events

Field Naturalist's Club of Victoria
"Fungal Foray"
Big Pats Creek
(near Warburton)
Sunday 4 September
10.30am

The Field Nat's Club is Victoria's oldest conservation group, founded in 1880. They advocate conservation and the study of natural history.

The Fungi Group aims to widen our knowledge of fungi in the field.

Contact Geoff Lay through the club on 9877 9860 or fncv@vicnet.net.au.

A \$5 fee exists for non-members to cover insurance during field trips. Or you could join the Field Nat's Club.

National Threatened Species Day
Wednesday 7 September
Threatened Species Network

The aims of this day are to encourage the community to help conserve our unique native flora and fauna.

A number of events and activities, such as displays, guided walks, exhibitions, festivals and workshops are co-ordinated across Aust to raise community awareness about the plight of threatened sp. and to encourage community participation in conservation activities.

For more info about activities in Victoria and to obtain your free info kit ring 1800 803 772.

Ceres Organic Market
Every Saturday morning

A vibrant community market is held at CERES every Saturday. Located between the animal stables and market garden, the focus of the market is on affordable organic fruit, veg and bakery goods; plus hand-made clothing, natural soaps and skincare, native flowers, jewellery, pottery, woodcraft, massage, tarot and recycled/second-hand items.

The market provides local people with an affordable, ethical and friendly way of doing business within a village atmosphere.

Ceres is located at 8 Lee St, Brunswick East. www.ceres.org.au

BushMonth October
Trust for Nature

Based on the "open garden" concept, BushMonth October is designed to showcase properties, permanently protected by Trust for Nature and to promote conservation of natural habitat on private land.

Properties are open for visits by the general public each weekend in October. The landowners are highly enthusiastic conservation practitioners. They are happy to share their knowledge, expertise and passion with visitors.

A full colour brochure will be available in early Sept. For a copy ring 9670 9933 or email trustnature@tfn.org.au.

Platypus Insights Tours
Australian Platypus Conservancy

Would you like to see a platypus?

The Australian Platypus Conservancy's Platypus Research and Conservation Centre is located at Toorourrong Reservoir Park near Whittlesea.

A limited number of Platypus Insights tours are run each year. You will enjoy a short talk on the platypus and conservation related activities and then have an opportunity to watch platypus in the wild.

Contact the Conservancy on 9716 1626 or email platypus@vicnet.net.au.